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Europe's far right and its attitude towards climate change and environmentalism

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**MÁSTER UNIVERSITARIO EN RELACIONES
INTERNACIONALES, SEGURIDAD Y DESARROLLO**

**“EUROPE’S FAR RIGHT AND ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS
CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTALISM”**

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ABSTRACT

Recent years have been marked by two conspicuous developments in the political landscape. The first one is the rising wave of nationalism in Europe reflected in increased parliamentary representation of far-right parties, both nationally and on EU level, which has probably reached its zenith with the successful Brexit campaign. The second one is the growing concern for and increasing engagement in addressing the burning issue of climate change and environmentalism. This paper embarks on deciphering the interconnection between the two developments. The objective of this thesis is to perform mapping of the current positions of Europe's far right on the environmental and climate agenda. For this purpose, I have performed a qualitative content analysis of the 2019 EP election programmes/manifestos of seven European far-right parties. The analysis is framed within four related concepts: 1) climate scepticism; 2) climate change vis-à-vis globalisation; 3) the role of international organisations/instruments in addressing climate change; and 4) energy transition. The results of the analysis show that, despite the parties sharing the same ideology and system of values, they do not have a uniform stance on climate change and environmentalism and their attitude towards these issues varies considerably.

Keywords: *far right, climate change, environmentalism, climate scepticism, globalisation, international organisations/instruments, energy transition*

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen significant rise of the European far right as parties that have traditionally been positioned on the margins of the political landscape have managed to gain increased political representation within both national parliaments and the European Parliament. Some of the feats accomplished by Europe's far right include the Brexit referendum, where the main driver of the Leave campaign was the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP), which in the 2014 European Parliament elections landed 24 seats as the most voted UK party, the French National Rally's success in achieving two consecutive wins at the European Parliament

elections in 2014 and in 2019, the ascendance of the Sweden Democrats, a party with fascist ideological roots, to third position at the Swedish national elections in 2018, or the Spanish Vox obtaining the third biggest number of seats at the Spanish parliamentary elections in November 2019.

At the same time, in recent years we have witnessed an increased concern for the issues of climate change and environmental protection on a global level. Events that have probably led to increased saliency of these issues include the signing of the Paris Agreement – a milestone document that showed international recognition of the urgent need for taking climate mitigation measures, the subsequent announcement of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement made by Donald Trump, but also the speeches and actions of the environmental activist Greta Thunberg that contributed towards putting the environmental agenda in the media spotlight. Another indicator of the growing concern for these issues are the results of the Standard Eurobarometer surveying the public opinion in the European Union which showed that in the spring of 2019 climate change ascended to 2nd position with 22% of the respondents indicating it as their main concern, whereas the environment jumped to 6th position with 13% in comparison to previous surveys.

Having in mind that extensive research work has been carried out on both topics individually, it would be interesting and insightful to delve deeper into their correlation. The research in this thesis is envisaged to be carried out against the backdrop of the existing far-right discourse on climate change and environmentalism and provide an answer to the following research question:

Is there a difference in the approach taken by different European far-right parties in addressing climate change and environmental issues?

The research shall consist of a qualitative content analysis aimed at identifying the similarities and differences among Europe's far right in addressing the issues of climate change and environmentalism within the election programmes/manifestos for the European Parliament elections in 2019. A total of 7 case studies shall be subject to analysis: Vlaams Belang (Belgium), National Rally (France), Alternative for Germany (Germany), Party for Freedom (The Netherlands), Vox (Spain), Sweden Democrats (Sweden), and UK Independence Party (the

United Kingdom). The selection of the case studies is based on the availability of election programmes for the EP elections in 2019. The fact that these seven parties have gained increased parliamentary representation in recent years adds more weight to the relevance of the selected sample. The appropriateness of the selected period of analysis is justified by the fact that it follows two significant climate-related events: the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2016 and the US announcement of withdrawal one year later. It is expected that such developments could have triggered a reaction among Europe's far right to begin addressing these topics in a more extensive and systematic manner. Therefore, as a prelude to the main research, I have included a brief quantitative analysis in the form of comparison between the election programmes/manifestos of the aforementioned parties for the EP elections in 2014 and in 2019 concerning their environmentalism. Despite the fact that the EP election programmes/manifestos provide only a limited insight into the discourse of the far right, they are a valuable piece of the puzzle.

The methodology applied in the main research is the one of qualitative content analysis. The qualitative analysis is carried out by performing manual coding for the purpose of categorising the attitudes within pre-established concepts already present in the discourse of the far right. The concepts have been previously operationalized by focusing the attention on four particular components derived in response to the following questions: 1) Are far-right parties sceptical of climate change, and if yes, what does their climate scepticism relate to; 2) How does climate change relate to globalisation; 3) How does the far right perceive the role of international organisations/instruments in addressing climate and environmental issues; 4) What is the attitude of the far right towards energy transition.

Due to language knowledge limitations, some of the party programmes/manifestos have been translated using machine translation engines (DeepL for Dutch and French and Google Translate for Swedish). The exercise is aimed at mapping the position of the afore-mentioned party organisations on Europe's environmental and climate agenda in respect of the four abovementioned concepts: climate scepticism, climate change vis-à-vis globalisation, perception of the role of international organisations in climate issues and the attitude of the far right towards energy transition. The exercise is expected to show that, unlike their uniform stance on issues such as immigration, their attitude towards climate change and the environment paints a rather diversified picture.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Far-right parties' ideology¹

The earliest predecessors to the far-right movement can be traced back to the French revolution and the diverse groups comprising the counterrevolutionary camp. However, it was not until World War I that common people started positioning themselves in the political spectrum since previously it was something characteristic primarily for the members of the legislative bodies (Crapez as cited in Camus & Lebourg, 2017:3). The leaders of the far right did not consider themselves to be “nationalists”, but rather preferred to call themselves “patriots” (Camus & Lebourg, 2017:7). They would never use the term “far-right” to describe themselves, instead they would opt for “the national right” or “the national movement” (Camus & Lebourg, 2017:1). In 1962, Daniel Bell, an American sociologist and professor at Harvard University, reflected his opinion on the radical right in the following manner: “Today the politics of the radical right is the politics of frustration – the sour impotence of those who find themselves unable to understand, let alone command, the complex mass society that is the polity today” (Bell, 2002: 42). Cas Mudde is in some way contesting this assertion by claiming that this view forms part of the dominant academic discourse that explains the radical right ideology through the thesis of “normalization of pathology” as established by Scheuch and Klingemann. According to this thesis, the radical right is pathology within the western society that can flourish only in times of crisis (Mudde, 2008:2). By conducting empirical examination, Mudde is shifting the thesis from “normal pathology” to “pathological normalcy” as he maintains that the radical right is not something foreign to mainstream opinions, but rather a radicalisation thereof (Mudde, 2008:9). The main issues that the radical right's views converge on are what Mudde calls the “radical right trinity” which comprises the topics of immigration, corruption and security. The mission of the populist radical right parties is not to shift the people from the position they have on certain issues, but rather to redirect their attention and put more weight on issues that the

¹ The term “far right” in this paper has been applied as an umbrella term and has been used interchangeably with the terms “radical right”, “radical populist right”, “right-wing populist right” in order to denote indiscriminately all the actors positioned further to the right of the mainstream right-wing parties.

radical right pledges ownership over (Mudde, 2008:10). Diverging from the so called radical right trinity, in this thesis I will try to shed light on the position of the far right on climate change and environmental issues, a topic that is not traditionally considered to form part of their agenda.

The analysis will be based on four key concepts that have been continuously present in the discourse of the Europe's far-right reflected in the answers to the afore-mentioned questions: 1) Are far-right parties sceptical of climate change, and if yes, what does their climate scepticism relate to; 2) How does climate change relate to globalisation; 3) How does the far right perceive the role of international organisations/instruments in addressing climate and environmental issues; 4) What is the attitude of the far right towards energy transition.

Climate scepticism

In the past, the topic of climate change has been mainly reserved for the natural scientists. However, recent decades have seen rise in the salience of the issue and mainstreaming thereof as an issue of concern to the general public. The modern day environmental crisis, covering a wide range of issue, starting from local ones, such as air and water pollution, and ending with global ones, such as climate change (Forchtner, Kroneder & Wetzel, 2018:589), has coincided with another crisis – the crisis of liberal democracy – that has provided a window of opportunity for the flourishing of the far right in Europe (Forchtner, 2019:1).

One of the earlier research undertakings into the perception of environmental issues by Europe's far right was conducted by Gemenis, Katsanidou and Vailopoulou and published in 2012. The study aimed at examining how the radical right parties in Europe frame their discourse in terms of environmental issues. For the purpose of this, they have selected thirteen parties from twelve European countries and have performed a qualitative analysis of their most recent national election programmes and of their 2009 European Parliament election programmes focusing on several environmental issue components, among them global warming (Gemenis, Katsanidou & Vailopoulou, 2012:14). The process of analysis of their election programme declarations against the statement that "Global warming is man-made" showed that, apart from one party which recognises the challenge of global warming and its association with anthropogenic influence, the others displayed a clearly anti-environmental stance (Gemenis, Katsanidou & Vailopoulou, 2012:15).

The concept of climate change scepticism encompasses a rather consistent flow of arguments intended at rejecting, disputing or questioning the generally accepted understanding that the anthropogenic influence is the principal cause of change of the global climate that would have severe consequences on the ecosystems and on the human populations, unless addressed accordingly. The advocates of the mainstream thesis of climate change and its human-induced origins consider climate change sceptics or climate change deniers to be not only those who refuse to accept the scientific assertions, but also those who display positive refusal in terms of being unconvinced or agnostic or making inconclusive opinions on the topic (Van Rensburg, 2015:1).

Generally, climate scepticism can be divided in three main categories: trend scepticism, attribution scepticism and impact scepticism. Trend scepticism, which in fact implies denial of the existence of global warming, has been waning over time and its supporters have become “species under threat of extinction”. Trend sceptics claim that the measured warming trend is a result of the so called “urban heat island effect”, meaning that the urbanisation around the metering stations is affecting the reliability of the measurements. However, these claims have been debunked by the scientific community as the measurements have been adjusted to accommodate this effect (Rahmstorf, 2004:77). Attribution scepticism is expressed in the form of a doubt that human activities are the root cause of climate change trends. A small group of attribute sceptics have even claimed that the increased CO₂ presence in the atmosphere is not human-induced, but it rather emerges as a result of natural processes whereby it is released from the oceans. Despite this, the majority of them agree that increased CO₂ levels are a result of anthropogenic activities; however, they still doubt that humans are responsible for climate warming by putting forward the thesis that increased CO₂ levels do not lead to significant climatic warming and that there must be natural reasons for this phenomenon (Rahmstorf, 2004:78). The third category of climate sceptics are the so called impact sceptics who believe that global warming is not detrimental and that it could be even beneficial. According to their argumentation, the positive impact of global warming might be expected, for example, in the new opportunities for agricultural production to be potentially extended into higher latitudes (Rahmstorf, 2004:79). This categorisation offered by Rahmstorf could be designed as a pyramid of climate change scepticism that goes top down from most radical to more modest denial. The top of the pyramid (trend scepticism) accommodates those who are in denial of the existence of a

significant climate warming trend. The middle layer (attribution scepticism) represents those who might accept the argumentation that the warming trend exists, but don't believe that it can be attributed to humans. The bottom layer of the pyramid (impact scepticism) is reserved for those who might agree that humans are having influence on climate change, but they trivialise the potential negative impact. This typology is quite relevant as it reflects the scientific evidence argumentations made in the assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Van Rensburg, 2015:3).

Over time, as the debate over climate change evolved, the forms of scepticism have evolved as well. In this regard, Rensburg extended Rahmstorf's typology in such a way that he placed the trend-attribution-impact scepticism under the category of evidence scepticism and added two more categories: process scepticism and response scepticism. Process sceptics are critical of two main processes. The first one is the process of generating scientific knowledge. According to them, the IPCC reports are not so scientifically robust, but are rather seen as consensus documents, and the way that climate research has been funded creates a biased environment where certain research is not taken into consideration by the mainstream climate research groups. The second process is the process of climate decision making. This sub-group of process sceptics are suspicious that climate change issues may be a conspiracy and that the decision making of the public might be based on a misperception created by mainstream climate researchers and exaggeration of the issue by the media (Smith & Leiserowitz; Whitmarsh, as cited in Van Rensburg, 2015:4). Forchtner identifies process scepticism as attitudes of doubt of the far right towards scientific work and attaching adjectives, such as "hysteric" and "alarmist" to the public debate on climate change. Some of them even refer to it as "climate change as a religion" (Forchtner, 2019). Response scepticism refers to the "doubts about the efficacy of action on climate change; doubts about the personal and societal relevance of climate change" (Capstick & Pidgeon as cited in Van Rensburg, 2015:4). If evidence scepticism is considered to be the core of climate scepticism, then response scepticism is at its margins since it deals with matters that do not have to be directly linked to climate issues, but are rather concerned with the policies and governance in terms of government regulations and instruments, strategic policies and the efficiency of tax/pricing mechanisms (Van Rensburg, 2015:6). Response scepticism is usually linked to claims about "de-industrialisation" of Europe, policies which are detrimental to

the common people and reforms that we should not pursue, unless the others implement them as well (Forchtner, 2019).

The studies that have been undertaken so far show that the attitude of the far right towards climate issues is not straightforward at all. It means that the climate-change scepticism present among the far right is not simply reduced to denial of anthropogenic climate change. Instead, their discourse is marked by the presence of the aforementioned evidence scepticism, process scepticism or response scepticism. Forchtner suggests that maybe not all, but many of the far-right parties are sceptical towards climate change issues (Forchtner, 2019:2). Hess and Renner also point out to a tendency among far-right parties to reject climate science (Hess & Renner, 2019:419).

In an attempt to provide an explanation of the correlation between right-wing populism and its animosity towards the climate agenda, Lockwood carried out a review of the existing literature on populism by applying two different approaches: a structuralist approach and an ideological approach. According to the structuralist approach, the link between right-wing populism and animosity towards climate change can be traced to the period when technological change and globalisation were set in motion, thus giving rise to populism which in turn provided refuge to all those who felt marginalised and “left behind” in this process. The hostility towards climate policies may have its origins in the structural changes which, among other things, brought along job losses in carbon-intensive sectors. However, the author finds the ideological approach to be more convincing. The ideological approach portrays the climate policy as a collateral damage in the agenda pushed forward by right-wing populist groups against migration. By combining nationalism, authoritarianism and anti-elitism they divide the world in two: common people on one side and corrupt cosmopolitan elites on the other side (Lockwood, 2018:15). And as Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the French right-wing populist National Front and denier of anthropogenic climate change, once stated, ecology is the “new religion of the bohemian bourgeois”, thus equalling environmentalism with cosmopolitan elitism (Onishi, 2019).

Climate change vis-à-vis globalisation

The intensification of the phenomenon of climate change came with the Industrial Revolution. Prior to this game-changing process, climate change was attributed to natural causes, like for example, volcanic eruptions, changes in solar energy or natural changes in the concentrations of greenhouse gases (IPCC as cited in “Causes of Climate Change”, n.d.). The issue of climate change reached another level when new processes were set in motion in the aftermath of World War II. The end of the war marked a new beginning in the international relations with the establishment of the United Nations and the Breton Woods system of monetary management. Such a constellation provided the foundations not only for political, economic or cultural globalisation, but also for international scientific cooperation in the area of climate change as a global issue (Malone, 2002:155).

Existing literature points out to the process of globalisation as a double-edged sword. Maneschi, for example, claims that globalisation has a negative impact on climate change because it is fostering global production and international trade. In support of his claim, he is pointing out to the direct link between the gross domestic product and manufacturing, industrial agriculture and transportation (road, sea and air transportation, both freight and passenger transportation) as a source of greenhouse gas emissions (Maneschi, 2018:53). However, this is only one side of the coin as all scientific activities undertaken in the area of climate change since their early beginnings have taken place against the backdrop of globalisation. While analysts in the area of climate change blame globalisation for the environmental issues, at the same time they call upon a global approach in addressing these issues (Malone, 2002:143).

In an opinion article published in “The Conversation”, Kevin Albertson, Professor of Economics at the Manchester Metropolitan University, speaks about the alternatives to globalisation from an economic point of view. He claims that according to the economic theory, in a situation where large portion of national businesses belong to foreign owners, the domestic economy will increasingly work for the benefit of foreign capital, instead of working for the benefit of its own citizens. Considering the nation-state as a shield that could offer protection against such developments, some might fall in the trap of nationalism. Therefore, the author is offering localism as a solution to the problem (Albertson, 2017). However, the concept of localism, at least in the area of environmentalism, might be considered too close to the far right.

What is interesting is that the existing research work on anti-globalisation movements is focused on left-wing civil society groups and only a small portion of it looks into the interrelation between anti-globalisation, localism and the far right (Park, 2013:322). Some researchers have examined the links between environmental movements and the far right. Such work can be found in Sferios (1988), who has written about the controversial interactions between the Sierra Club, which is a US environmental organisation, and US anti-immigration lobby groups (Park, 2013:322). In his research on the correlations between the eco-politics of localism and the far right, Park has concluded that the far right is “hijacking” localisation campaigns for their own purposes, and what should be a progressive eco-localism in the end is reduced to economic nationalism (Park, 2013:338).

Environmental protection and eco-localism are also used as one of the concepts on the basis of which Europe’s far right is framing its anti-immigration discourse. Environmental Malthusians believe that human population growth caused by immigration flows is exerting pressure on the resources present in the respective regions, thus leading to environmental degradation (Bandarage as cited in Park, 2013:326). Similar discourse could be observed in France’s National Rally. In a press statement made in April 2019, Jordan Bardella, National Rally’s spokesperson, said that “Borders are the environment’s greatest ally. It is through them that we will save the planet”. In a similar fashion, Le Pen herself claimed that “Those who are nomadic do not care about the environment. They have no homeland” (Aronoff, 2019).

The notion of eco-localism relates closely to the concept of ecological nationalism designed by Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan that consists of a juxtaposed view on nature: the cosmopolitan vs. the nativist (Solberg, 2008:187). Many authors describe ecological nationalism as a response to environmental issues that rights the wrongs of “capitalist-extractionist approaches which led to complex histories of oppression”. Its nativist form seems to be promoted by radical-right groups and parties that seek to confine the environmental issues within the nation-state boundaries (Lubarda, 2019a).

The most extreme form of this romanticised worldview of the connection between people and their land can be found in the concept of eco-fascism whose origins can be traced back to Nazi Germany and the notion of “Blood and Soil”. The notion of “Blood and Soil” embodied the idea that a racially-defined group of people (the blood) have a deep-rooted mystic connection with the land where they are born and raised (the soil) (Bennett, 2019). Although the concept

may seem outdated in a highly globalised world, some recent events have put it in the media spotlight, such as the Christchurch mosque shootings in March 2019 and the El Paso shooting in August 2019, in which both perpetrators were identified as eco-fascists (Lennard, 2019; Wilson, 2019).

However, the concept of eco-fascism is too narrow and insufficient to cover the complexity of the nexus between the far right and environmentalism (Lubarda, 2019:0). Therefore, Lubarda (2019) proposes the concept of “far-right ecologism” as an all-embracing notion whose ideological structure shares elements of eco-fascism, such as the understanding of nation and nature as one, and giving preference to the national ecosystem in opposition to the abstract globalist environmentalism. At the same time, it also includes elements of spirituality and Manicheanism and “is situated between the conservative understanding of responsibility and the ‘love of home’, and the eco-nationalist call for protecting what is ‘in our boundaries’.” (Lubarda, 2019b).

The role of international organisations/instruments in climate issues

The initial steps into research of climate change date back to the end of the 19th century when Svante Arrhenius, a renowned Swedish physicist and chemist, put forward the assumption that increased CO₂ levels in the atmosphere could lead to increase in temperatures on Earth. However, a more systematic approach was introduced after World War II when countries were making efforts to establish international scientific cooperation. Their work bore fruit with the formation of an atmospheric measurement network as part of the newly established World Meteorological Organisation (Malone, 2002:155). The initial issues on the environmental agenda were of such nature that it was feasible for them to be addressed within national boundaries. These included degradation of the countryside or pollution of local rivers. However, the contemporary environmental threats and risks know no borders (Forchtner and Kolvraa, 2015:200). The transnationality of the contemporary environmental issues related to climate implies that the nation-state has to concede its agency to international entities, thus challenging the fundamental principles of nationalism and sovereignty (Anderson as cited in Forchtner and Kolvraa, 2015:200). The globalist nature of the issue of climate change requires international environmental agreements, such as the agreements that have emerged from the Conferences of

the Parties. However, they face their own limitations in terms of difficulties when it comes to their design, implementation and monitoring. The threat posed by countries which are “free-riders” always lingers (Maneschi, 2018:57).

Initially, the foundations of the fight against climate change were laid with the establishment of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change back in 1992. After spending decades negotiating on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the first breakthrough came with the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. However it didn’t yield the desired results as the emissions of the main greenhouse gases continued to rise steadily. Following the failure of the Copenhagen conference in 2009 to produce a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, causing many to believe that climate multilateralism is dead, a meaningful step forward was finally made with the Paris Agreement reached on 12 December 2015 which was considered a new milestone in the global fight against climate change. It provides a framework for countries to make voluntary pledges for reducing their emissions that will be subject to review and comparison globally. It is also expected that the ambition will be pushed forward by a process of “naming and shaming” (Falkner, 2016:1107). The Paris Agreement marked a shift in such a way that it converted the negotiations from a confrontation on the legally binding targets into a bottom-up approach of voluntary pledges to mitigate climate change (Falkner, 2016:1124).

A severe blow came in June 2017 when US President Donald Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in a speech marked by condemnation of multilateralism and international agreements as mechanisms that interfere with the sovereignty of the nation-state (Trump, 2017). In a similar fashion, the majority of radical-right parties, being inherently anti-globalist, are practicing a discourse in which climate change policies are being perceived as a project promoted by globalists with the purpose of debilitating the sovereignty of the nation-state (Hermansson, n.d.).

According to a study titled “Convenient Truths” conducted by the Berlin-based think-tank “adelphi”, the Paris Agreement has little support among right-wing populist parties who show distrust towards international mechanisms. The Dutch Party for Freedom, for example, considers that it is a sovereign right of every state to decide what it will do concerning climate change and accuses the elites of wanting to benefit from the climate action plans, while the ordinary citizens will bear the brunt. France’s National Rally has branded the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change “a communist project” and considers pulling France out of the

Paris Agreement, believing multilateral agreements to be ineffective and calling for local actions instead. Italy's Northern League considers the Paris Agreement to be economically unfair as it creates unfair competition between Chinese companies and companies of other developing countries on one part and Italian companies which are environmentally compliant on the other part (Carius & Schaller, 2019:21). Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's Law and Justice Party are the only right-wing populist parties which are officially supportive of the Paris Agreement, although their attitude is perceived as paying lip service only (Carius & Schaller, 2019:22).

Many of Europe's right-wing populist parties in their national election manifestos or statements position themselves against the climate and energy policies imposed by the EU, especially against the binding rules, including emission reduction targets, energy efficiency targets, renewable energy, etc., under the excuse of economic or social considerations (Carius & Schaller, 2019:22). The study concludes that the majority of these parties are against EU actions interfering with their national sovereignty in general, not only against those related to climate policies (Carius & Schaller, 2019:23).

Energy transition

The energy transition process generally evolves within three main pathways. The first pathway of transition is confined within the energy sector of fossil fuels itself. It implies the transition from petroleum or coal to natural gas as a source of energy, thus reducing harmful emissions and improving the quality of life of people. The second pathway of energy transition is the process of decarbonisation which means replacing fossil fuels with alternative sources of energy, such as nuclear energy or renewable energy, and achieving energy efficiency. The third form of energy transition is the re-carbonisation, or reverting to higher percentage of fossil fuels in the mix of energy sources due to, for example, common interest of fossil fuel industry and political conservatives, rapidly increased energy demand that cannot be met by the existing low-carbon energy sources, development of fracking technologies or measures for phasing out nuclear energy (Hess & Renner, 2019:420).

The rise of right-wing populism and post-truth politics challenges climate policies and sustainable energy transformation (Fraune & Knodt, 2018:4). Right-wing populist parties in general consider that climate policies, such as energy system transition to low-carbon energy, are

justified only if they produce direct benefits to the nation and its people (Rydgren as cited in Fraune & Knodt, 2018:1). In a study conducted by Dermont and Kammermann, it has been identified that “climate change scepticism is a sufficient, but not a necessary condition for opposition towards clean energy policy (Fraune & Knodt, 2018:5). In a similar fashion, the study of Carius and Schaller (2019) reports that regardless of their positioning on climate change, some right-wing populist parties are openly in favour of energy transition. Such attitudes are explained by two types of benefits, namely energy independence and quality of life, framed by these parties within the context of national independence and homeland and nature (Carius & Schaller, 2019:20).

In 2019, Hess and Renner have conducted a study comparing party platform statements on energy transition made by centre-right conservative and far-right parties in the most recent election cycles through 2017 in the seven highest emitting EU countries: France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The position of France’s National Rally on fossil fuels, nuclear energy and renewable energy did not differentiate much from the position of the mainstream conservative party. In the 2017 presidential elections, the National Rally’s candidate Marine Le Pen stood in favour of massive development of renewable energy systems, such as solar energy, biogas energy and wood energy; however, she advocated for putting an immediate stop to the use of wind energy. One of the priorities in her election manifesto was also the provision of home insulation aimed at improving energy efficiency as a measure to fight energy poverty by reducing the energy costs for the consumers (Hess & Renner, 2019:421).

Germany’s Alternative for Germany discarded the use of solar and wind energy as unfeasible due to the intermittent character of the process of power generation. They criticised the installation of wind turbines for spoiling the landscape and representing a threat to birds. The party also criticised Germany’s nuclear phase-out, which made the country dependent on foreign nuclear power plants, and supports the use of nuclear power plants while alternative solutions are being explored. Alternative for Germany is in favour of exploring the domestic possibilities for fracking and advocates for re-carbonisation by increasing the share of domestic fossil fuels in the energy mix as it believes that fossil fuels are necessary for safe and affordable power supply. The party promised that it will repeal the German Renewable Energy Heat Act that requires heating in buildings to be sourced from renewable energy as much as possible, as well as the German

Energy Saving Regulations that set standards for building insulation as they consider it dangerous since it supposedly leads to “inadequate air circulation and algal and fungal growth”. With its opinion on renewable energy, the Alternative for Germany significantly differs from Germany’s mainstream right-wing conservative party (Hess & Renner, 2019:422).

The Netherlands’ Party for Freedom has condemned renewable energy as harmful for the economy pinning the blame on it for the rising energy prices and loss of jobs. The party openly supported conventional energy generation for being cheaper and more cost-effective than renewable energy and it pronounced itself against the subsidies provided by the government for wind energy generation. Similarly to the case of Germany, the Netherlands’ far-right party has considerably different stance on energy transition than the chief mainstream conservative party (Hess & Renner, 2019:423).

The situation is different in Poland where the far-right party and the centre-right party coincided in the opinion on the EU directives related to climate and energy, but their responses on the directives were different. Both parties have been supportive of the coal industry. The far-right Law and Justice Party believe that carbon-rich energy sources are beneficial in terms of competitiveness of the Polish economy and ensure energy security for the country. Despite supporting solar, biomass, municipal waste and hydropower, they are strongly critical of wind energy (Hess & Renner, 2019:424).

In the case of Spain, Vox had no explicit statements on fossil fuels in its 2016 programme. However, they are supportive of domestic energy development and energy efficiency, as well as exploration of the possibility for natural-gas fracking (Hess & Renner, 2019:425).

The UKIP stood against state subsidies being provided to wind and solar power generation systems, which they consider to be unprofitable. They also showed support for the use of fossil fuels as part of the energy mix of coal, nuclear energy, shale gas, conventional gas and oil. The party considers that the 20% value added tax on fossil fuels needs to be repealed and that more funds should be invested in fracking technologies for shale gas in order to increase domestic energy security (Hess & Renner, 2019:425).

It was concluded that Europe’s far-right populist parties, apart from sharing anti-globalisation and anti-immigration policies, also have similar understanding of energy transition, reflected in their opposition to such policies, which varies considerably from one party to

another. They show open support for continued use of fossil fuels and exploration of the possibilities for fracking as a domestic source of energy, and lack of support for decarbonisation proposed by the EU or other international bodies and dismissal of renewable energies, especially wind power (Hess & Renner, 2019:427).

3. Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the 2019 European Parliament election programmes and manifestos of the European far-right parties that the selected sample is comprised of is preceded by a short quantitative analysis aimed at identifying potential shifts in their attitude towards the issues of climate change and environmentalism in recent years.

3.1. Potential shifts in the attitude of Europe's far right towards climate change and environmentalism

In order to recognise possible developments in the salience of the issues of climate change and environmentalism for Europe's far right I performed a brief quantitative analysis by comparing the election programmes and manifestos of the selected sample of parties for the European Parliament elections in 2014 and in 2019. The analysis consists of manual key word search of three groups of terms: 1) first group: terms preceded by the adjective "*climate*"²; 2) second group: the terms *environment/ environmental/ environmentally*; and 3) third group: the terms *ecology/ ecologic*, all of which are summarised below in a single wider category for the purpose of simplicity. It must be underlined that in respect of "*environment*", word counting was performed only in cases when it referred to the natural environment. The use within an unrelated context, like for example, "*work environment*", "*economic environment*", "*business environment*", etc., was disregarded. The results of the analysis are summarised in the table presented below.

² These include terms such as *climate change, climate agreements, climate policies, climate alarmism, climate hysteria, climate emergency, climate protests, climate realism, climate adaptation*, etc.

Table 1: *Prevalence of climate- and environment-related terms in the election programmes/manifestos from 2014 and 2019*

	Climate- and environment-related terms in 2014	Climate- and environment-related terms in 2019
<i>Vlaams Belang</i>	8	29
<i>Alternative for Germany</i>	5	22
<i>National Rally</i>	0*	36
<i>Party for Freedom</i>	0	2
<i>Vox</i>	5	8
<i>Sweden Democrats</i>	1	26
<i>UKIP</i>	2	20

*In the 2014 European Parliament elections, the National Rally did not have an individual party programme. They stood behind the manifesto of the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) whose vice president is in fact Marine Le Pen. Source: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06925/SN06925.pdf>

Source: EP election programmes/manifestos of Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, National Rally, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats and UKIP from 2014 and 2019

From the results we can conclude that in the period from 2014 to 2019 there has been an evident rise in the salience of issues of climate change and environmentalism among Europe's far-right parties.

Possible reasons for the occurrence of this trend among Europe's far right could be sought in two significant phenomena. The first one is the increased concern of the general public about climate change and environmentalism reflected in the results of the Standard Eurobarometer surveying the public opinion in the European Union which showed a clear trend: the Spring 2014 issue shows that, in respect of the main concerns on European level, climate change ranked 10th with 5% and the environment 12th with also 5%, whereas the results of the Eurobarometer Spring 2019 issue show evident increase in the salience of the two categories: climate change ascended to 2nd position with 22% of the respondents indicating it as their main concern, whereas the environment jumped to 6th position with 13%. The second significant phenomenon is the announcement of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement made by

President Donald Trump in 2017. Having into regard the position of the USA in the international system of balance of power it is expected that such a move would provoke a reaction among different political actors, and not only state actors, but also internally, among party organisations. Nevertheless, these are only assumptions whose corroboration or dismissal may be subject to a further more thorough analysis.

3.2. Qualitative analysis results

Climate scepticism

The analysis on whether the seven far-right parties from the sample show climate scepticism showed that four of them are openly sceptical, whereas for three of them, the findings are inconclusive since from the information provided in their 2019 EP election programmes/manifestos it cannot be understood whether they are climate sceptics or not. A more detailed interpretation of their positioning is presented in the following sections.

Vlaams Belang belongs to the group of far-right political parties that exhibit both process scepticism, as well as response scepticism. In their 2019 EP election manifesto, it is stated that they have no intention of taking part in the “climate hysteria imposed on us by certain left-wing parties and professional agitators with the support of the media and large sections of education”. According to them, children and young people are forced to take part in “political climate protests”. Further on, they link the process scepticism to response scepticism by stating that “the hysterical climate alarmism” will lead to ill-judged measures that will place a big burden in terms of energy affordability for the common people, which in the end will turn out to have insignificant or no impact at all on the climate or environment. The party doesn’t show evidence scepticism since in the election programme they claim to be confident in “the scientific research in alternative energy sources and climate adaptation”. They advocate for what they call climate realism, in opposition to the “apocalyptic scaremongering”, that will encourage young people to explore solutions on how to have a cleaner and healthier environment.

The National Rally, in its 76-pages long election programme for the 2019 EP elections, does not provide a clear indication of its stance on climate change. In fact, climate change is mentioned only twice. The first time it is mentioned in reference with the perceived threat to

Europe in the form of real jurisdictional control of its policies through the actions of NGOs which persecute states “on the pretext of weaknesses in their fight against climate change”. The second time climate change is mentioned is within the context of the party’s proposal for subordinating the trade relations and free-trade agreements between states to environmental requirements, which can also serve as a mechanism to “designate rogue states that are abandoning the fight against climate change, against the loss of biodiversity”. From the latter it can be deduced that the National Rally acknowledges the existence of climate change and its negative impact, thus discarding the possibility for categorisation in the evidence sceptics group. However, in terms of process scepticism or response scepticism, the results are inconclusive since the party fails to provide any opinion on the phenomenon of climate change.

From the seven case studies analysed in this paper, the Alternative for Germany has the most radical opinion on climate change. The party can be categorised as evidence sceptic. More specifically, they could be considered attribution sceptics. According to the argumentation presented in their 2019 EP election programme, “climate in all climate zones of the earth - from tropical to polar - has been changing by natural law since the earth was formed”. They doubt that the recent changes in climate can be attributed to mankind or that humans can control the climate changes, especially when it comes to global warming. Apart from denying the anthropogenic impact on climate, they go a step further by arguing that “not least because of the increasing CO₂ content in the atmosphere, world food harvests have increased significantly”. Such opinions could be accommodated in the category of impact scepticism. The Alternative for Germany also displays response scepticism when referring to the climate and energy policy. According to them, this policy is based on “the hypothesis of man-made climate change” and will negatively affect people’s access to affordable energy, whilst only few will rake in the benefits and enrich. The party also considers that climate protection policies have been a mistake. They reject the EU measures on reduction of CO₂ emissions justified by climate protection and call for abandoning the scheme of emission trading certificates since it would only increase energy prices. The Alternative for Germany also rejects the Paris Agreement since it perceives it as a “non-binding declaration of intent without sanctions”.

The Netherlands’s Party for Freedom, although reducing its political pledges to a single-page pamphlet, succeeded in expressing its process and response scepticism. The party pronounced itself against the “climate hysteria”. They urged that the Netherlands should not

pursue “the European climate madness” since such policies will lead to bankruptcy of its citizens and the country as a whole.

In its party manifesto, the Spanish Vox, deliberately or not, fails to mention the term “climate change”. On one occasion it mentions “climate contingency plans” as one of the areas in which the European Union should work as part of the development of the Multiannual Financial Frameworks. On another occasion it mentions “the changing climatology” as one of the challenges when it comes to the natural environment and urges for protection of the environment. This formulation of the term itself [changing climatology], as if the climate is changing by laws of nature, could be interpreted as an attempt of the party to distance itself from the mainstream scientific knowledge that the climate is changing due to human activities. Nevertheless, the findings concerning the attitude of Vox towards climate change, at least in their 2019 EP election programme, are inconclusive.

Sweden Democrats is another far-right political party from the sample that disregards the issue of climate change in their 2019 EP election programme. Instead, they focus on protection of the environment. Nevertheless, they pronounce themselves in favour of the EU emission trading system as an efficient tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and phasing out fossil fuels, which could implicitly point out to recognition of the existence of climate change and its negative impacts and of the policies designed to address climate change. Therefore, it can be concluded that, at least evidence scepticism and response scepticism, are not present in their party programme.

The United Kingdom Independent Party is implicitly showing attribution scepticism (evidence scepticism) by casting doubt on the scientifically-based understanding that humans are mainly responsible for the occurrence of climate change. They argue that “we should separate the dogma of anthropogenic (man-made) climate change from conservation - care for and protection of the environment”. Their implicit attribution scepticism is accompanied by process scepticism in the sense that they dismiss the existence of a climate emergency and replace it with arguments about the existence of an environmental emergency in the form of deforestation and marine plastic pollution. The UKIP advocates for UK withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and any associated carbon trading schemes since its participation in these instruments will have little effect on the CO₂ levels around the globe, thus exhibiting its response scepticism. Among other things, they criticize the education system where children are “politically indoctrinated by

‘teacher activists’ who promote gender confusion, climate alarmism and a hatred of our own culture and heritage”.

The summarized results of this analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 2: *Presence of scepticism among the far-right parties in Europe*

<i>Vlaams Belang</i>	process scepticism response scepticism
<i>National Rally</i>	inconclusive implicitly no evidence scepticism
<i>Alternative for Germany</i>	evidence (attribution) scepticism impact scepticism response scepticism
<i>Party for Freedom</i>	process scepticism response scepticism
<i>Vox</i>	inconclusive
<i>Sweden Democrats</i>	inconclusive implicitly no evidence scepticism implicitly no response scepticism
<i>UKIP</i>	evidence (attribution) scepticism process scepticism response scepticism

Source: EP election programmes/manifestos of Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, National Rally, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats and UKIP from 2019

Climate change vis-à-vis globalisation

In respect of the links between climate change and the processes of globalisation, the majority, or four (Alternative for Germany, Party for Freedom, Vox and Sweden Democrats) out of the seven sampled parties, do not make any connection between the two phenomena, at least not in their respective 2019 EP election programmes. Vlaams Belang shows a small degree of Malthusianism by making links between climate policies, energy policies and population growth.

The discourse of the National Rally in this regard is quite extensive and it is characterised by eco-localism, eco-fascism, far-right ecologism and ecological nationalism with anti-nomadism and natalism elements. The UKIP also exhibits far-right ecologism and ecological nationalism, but environmental Malthusianism as well.

Vlaams Belang does not delve deep into the relation between climate change and globalisation. In their discourse, these two elements are not directly associated; instead they are bridged by the topic of energy. According to them, pressure groups and ecological parties are making unrealistic demands in addressing climate change, global warming and greenhouse gases which are not affordable in the light of a growing energy demand, while “the population explosion in large parts of the world is never taken into account”. It is obvious that this link that they establish between energy policy, climate policy and population growth contains Malthusian elements. Extending further on the debate on energy, Vlaams Belang claims that in order for the state to be able to provide cheap energy, it must strive towards “as much autonomy as possible from the world markets”, which shows preference for the national against the international.

In its 2019 EP election manifesto, the National Rally pledges to make Europe the first ecological civilisation in the world and advocates for the promotion of a model of ecological society “by ensuring that states have full possession of their territory, by refusing nomadism and the plundering of its resources, and by re-establishing the primacy of the collective ‘we’, and hence the general interest, over predators of all kinds”. This shows that the National Rally sees the globalised world as a ruthless setting where those who are deeply rooted in their place of origin fall prey to the nomadic predators. This is a clear example of the contrasted nativist vs. cosmopolitan worldview. They believe that nomadism is an ideology that is being used as a weapon against Europe. According to them, mobility and nomadism is at odds with the attachment of people to their land and region. It can be interpreted that this goes in line with the eco-fascist principle of land and soil. The National Rally also criticises the “one-sided” interpretation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “which contradicts the freedom of peoples to define the conditions of access to their territory and citizenship”. Therefore, the party pledges to help states manage the movement of what they call unselected populations, and also encourages states, which wish to implement such measures, to put in place natalist policies. The latter is an approach that contradicts the Malthusian positions that some far right parties have, although this natalist approach refers only to European countries. The National Rally considers

that the natural richness in Europe is nowadays threatened by globalisation which implies nomadism in the form of mass migration, an uprooted life based on exploiting territories without any responsibility. This could also be interpreted within the concept of ecological nationalism as defined by Cederlof and Sivaramakrishnan. As discussed above, Lubarda (2019a) considers that the far right is using ecological nationalism as a framework to confine environmental issues within the boundaries of the nation-state. In this regard, the National Rally argues that “the citizens of the nations of Europe deserve to be saved from globalisation, which means plundering everything that can be plundered, liquidating everything that can be monetised, and fleeing to other lands to destroy.” As a response to such developments, they promote localism and an economy of proximity. By urging for local preferences, the party displays a form of far-right ecologism. It also pledges to promote the recognition of the right to health and environmental security as something that has precedence over open markets and free trade.

Germany’s Alternative for Germany, the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Spanish Vox and the Sweden Democrats do not make any reference to the links between globalisation and climate change in their respective 2019 election programmes. In the case of Alternative for Germany, it is more or less expected as they believe that climate change is a natural process and is in no way related to human activities.

The UKIP in its 2019 EP election manifesto is showing far-right ecologism and environmental Malthusianism. They say that in order for the quality of life to be preserved, the UK must protect its Green Belt, and the biggest threat to the Green Belt and the entire UK environment, in their perception, is the unsustainable population growth which is predominantly caused by uncontrolled mass migration. In this way, the UKIP is using, or better said abusing, environmental protection to frame its anti-immigration discourse. The party also touches upon ecological nationalism by stating that after the departure from the EU, they will promote high environmental standards to protect the air quality, woodlands, waterways and other habitats within their national borders.

The summarised results of the analysis are provided in the table below.

Table 3: *Perception of the far-right of the impact of globalisation on climate change and the environment*

Vlaams Belang

implicit environmental Malthusianism

<i>National Rally</i>	eco-fascism anti-nomadism natalism far-right ecologism ecological nationalism
<i>Alternative for Germany</i>	inconclusive
<i>Party for Freedom</i>	inconclusive
<i>Vox</i>	inconclusive
<i>Sweden Democrats</i>	inconclusive
<i>UKIP</i>	far-right ecologism environmental Malthusianism ecological nationalism

Source: EP election programmes/manifestos of Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, National Rally, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats and UKIP from 2019

Perception of the role of international organisations/instruments in climate issues

The analysis of this particular context paints a much divided picture concerning the position of Europe's far-right parties. Vlaams Belang and Vox are unclear and make no obvious references to this issue. The National Rally shows implicit disapproval of international organisations/mechanisms dedicated to environmental protection. Further on, on one hand we have the Alternative for Germany, the Party for Freedom and the UKIP, which are conspicuously opposed to international climate arrangements, whilst on the other hand, the Sweden Democrats, although completely leaving out the term "climate change", position themselves openly in favour of international cooperation and mechanisms, including the carbon trading schemes, in addressing environmental issues.

Vlaams Belang in its election manifesto doesn't make any reference to the role of international organisations or instruments for addressing climate or environmental issues.

The National Rally, although not providing explicit opinions in this regard, are implicitly or indirectly opposing international or supranational mechanisms. This can be identified in the statements where they talk about the states having full possession of their territory and where

they urge for protecting the environment and fighting climate change by subordinating the commercial relations between states to environmental requirements which should have precedence over the economic requirements. Their preferences for the local approach also hold an underlying inherent opposition against solutions that they perceive as being imposed on them from outside their national boundaries. Their insistence on the inextricable bond between people and their land prevents them from accepting global mechanisms that interfere with the sovereignty.

The Alternative for Germany heavily criticises the EU for its climate and energy policy considering it another erroneous development following its “failure” with the migration crisis and the process of crisis management. They show open rejection towards the Paris Agreement perceiving it as “a non-binding declaration of intent without sanctions that provides for a shift of funds from highly industrialised countries to underdeveloped countries”. The Alternative for Germany also advocates for abandoning the emissions trading scheme, which is one of the most significant international mechanisms for addressing climate change, justifying it by the increase in energy prices that it produces. In general, they pronounce themselves to be against all EU measures for reduction of CO₂ aimed at protecting the climate, since as we have seen before, they do not believe in the anthropogenic impact on the climate. Therefore, such a position is more than expected. They also criticise the EU for its plans to phase out lignite through its CO₂ certificate scheme, whilst [they] considering the lignite to be the only cost-effective domestic energy source.

The Party for Freedom openly opposes the role of the international mechanisms in the fight against climate change by stating that the Netherlands should not take part in the “unaffordable European climate madness that will bring our country and citizen to bankruptcy”.

As it was discussed previously, in its election manifesto Vox fails to directly make reference to the term climate change. It refers to climate contingency and urges the EU, when developing its Multiannual Financial Frameworks, to formulate special budgets for, among other things, climate contingency plans. At another instance, when referring to the “changing climatology”, it goes further to speak about protection of the environment considering it as an intrinsic part of the Spanish identity. In this regard, they advocate for a European hunting regime as a core strategy of environmental policies. They consider hunting to be essential for conservation of the ecosystems and urge the EC, when performing impact assessment of its plans

or policies in the area of agriculture, to take into account the hunting as a necessary element of environmental protection.

The stance of the Sweden Democrats when it comes to the role of the international agreements/mechanisms is particularly interesting. It is true that in their election programme they do not mention the term climate change at all; however, they have an extensive section devoted to environmental protection. The party acknowledges that the environmental issues have a cross-border character and that cooperation on European level, as well as globally, is very important. In the fight against serious environmental threats, the Sweden Democrats position themselves as “advocates of international cooperation” and that they “are aware that real difference can only be achieved through global measures”. In contrast to some other far-right parties, such as the Alternative for Germany, the Sweden Democrats are strong supporters of the EU emissions trading system and call for steps to be taken in order for more countries outside the EU to become part of the existing scheme. They do not spare words in their appreciation of the EU emissions trading system by praising it as “the most efficient tool in the EU to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to phase out fossil energy in a cost-effective way”.

The UKIP pledges to pull the United Kingdom out of the Paris Agreement claiming that 98% of the global CO₂ emissions originate outside the UK. They also advocate for the UK to abandon the carbon trading schemes, since according to them, the participation of the UK in such schemes “will have little effect on global CO₂ levels”.

Summary of the conclusions drawn in the process of analysing the attitude towards this issue is presented below.

Table 4: *Attitude of the far right towards the role of international agreements/instruments in addressing climate change and environmental issues*

<i>Vlaams Belang</i>	inconclusive
<i>National Rally</i>	implicit disapproval
<i>Alternative for Germany</i>	openly opposed
<i>Party for Freedom</i>	openly opposed
<i>Vox</i>	inconclusive
<i>Sweden Democrats</i>	openly in favour of international cooperation

Source: EP election programmes/manifestos of Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, National Rally, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats and UKIP from 2019

Attitude of the far right towards energy transition

Three of the sampled parties (the National Rally, the Party for Freedom and Vox) completely disregard this topic. Vlaams Belang positions itself in favour of nuclear and renewable (solar and wind) energy. Both the Alternative for Germany and the UKIP stand against decarbonisation and advocate for an energy mix of conventional, nuclear and renewable energy; however, despite upholding renewable energy, they strongly oppose wind and solar energy. On the other hand, the Sweden Democrats are against the use of fossil fuels.

Vlaams Belang dedicates a significant part of its election programme to the topic of energy. They criticise the situation in the energy sector in Belgium for being almost entirely in foreign hands, which leads to outflow of resources from their economy. Their criticism is also directed towards the rising prices not only of electricity, but also of gas, fuel oil and diesel. As discussed before, they believe that “hysterical climate alarmism” results in ill-considered measures that have a negative impact on energy price. Linking the situation in the energy sector with the climate policies and the population growth, they also observe an increase in the energy demand, which cannot be met only by renewable energy. In order for the demand to be met in a continuous and substantial way, Vlaams Belang proposes the solution of combining alternative energy sources and nuclear energy. They advocate for financing diversified energy production, including solar energy, wind energy and nuclear energy, as well insulating old homes that have poor energy efficiency.

The National Rally, apart from some sporadic mentioning of the term “new energy”, completely fails to address this issue in their election manifesto, although they are otherwise known as fierce opponents of wind energy (Le Pen, 2020).

The Alternative for Germany devotes a lot of attention to the energy policy. As per their perception, the climate and energy policy in Europe is going in the wrong direction because it is based only on “the hypothesis of man-made climate change”. They want to abandon this policy because it will lead to expensive energy, thus hindering all prosperity. The Alternative for

Germany perceives the energy policy as a sovereign task of sovereign states and that each state is responsible to secure itself a stable energy supply, and thereby it should be guided by the availability of its own resources. The party's opposition to decarbonisation is more than obvious. They argue that it will result in reduction of Germany's economic power and "deliberate economy of scarcity". They advocate for a broad energy mix, including coal, mineral oil, natural gas, hydropower and nuclear power, which they consider to be a pre-condition for having a stable, economic and environmentally-friendly energy policy. The phasing out of lignite promoted by the EU is unacceptable to them. They refer to the wind and sun as "renewable energies" in inverted commas and consider them economically unfeasible since they depend on the weather conditions and even harmful to humans, nature and the environment. According to their opinion, coal-fired, gas-fired and nuclear power plants should remain in operation as long as it is reasonable under market conditions. The Alternative for Germany believes that the use of fossil fuels can be reduced in the medium and long term by relying on nuclear power.

The Party for Freedom and Vox do not make any reference to energy policy.

The Sweden Democrats by praising the EU emission trading scheme as the most efficient tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and phasing out fossil fuel energy are indirectly supporting the abandonment of fossil fuels. Further on, they argue that the energy union proposed by the EU, where the member states should adapt to and comply with common standards, might lead to increasing costs for Sweden. Therefore, they advocate for such adjustments to be made on intergovernmental and voluntary basis.

UKIP is openly against decarbonisation, and in this regard, they pledge to scrap the UK Climate Change Act (2008) which imposes obligations on the UK to attain annual decarbonisation levels of more than 5 per cent. They advocate for a mix of energy that will include nuclear, conventional and renewable energy. However, in respect of the renewable energy, they intend to terminate the subsidies for wind turbines and solar voltaic systems and express readiness to support renewable energy sources that can produce electricity at competitive prices. They position themselves in favour of re-carbonisation by promising to pursue rejuvenation of the coal industry in the UK in response to the issues of environmental damage and deforestation caused by combustion of wood pellets in the former coal-fired power stations. UKIP also pledges to work on developing the domestic gas industry in order to support the renewable energy system that is not very reliable during winter days. They express partial

support for the hydraulic fracturing as a source of energy. Namely, they would not support the use of this technique if operations are carried out close to residential areas where the infrastructure might be at risk or in areas where the majority of residents opposes it. The attitudes of the seven parties on this issue are summarised in the table below.

Table 5: *The preferences of the far right concerning sources of energy*

	In favour of	Against
<i>Vlaams Belang</i>	nuclear energy solar energy wind energy	
<i>National Rally</i>		
<i>Alternative for Germany</i>	coal mineral oil natural gas hydropower nuclear power	decarbonisation wind energy solar energy
<i>Party for Freedom</i>		
<i>Vox</i>		
<i>Sweden Democrats</i>		fossil fuels
<i>UKIP</i>	coal gas nuclear power conventional energy renewable energy (partially) hydraulic fracturing (partially)	decarbonisation wind energy solar energy

Source: EP election programmes/manifestos of Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, National Rally, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats and UKIP from 2019

4. Conclusions

What can be drawn as a conclusion from the analysis is that there is a lack of uniform stance among the different far-right parties in Europe in respect of climate change and environmental issues. The diversity in opinion can be observed in all of the four pillars of the conceptual framework applied.

In terms of climate scepticism, the majority of the sampled parties show response scepticism (Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, Party for Freedom and UKIP), but process scepticism is also quite common (Vlaams Belang, Party for Freedom, UKIP). The results of the analysis of the election programmes of some parties are inconclusive, such as the case of Vox, but on the other hand, there are some parties (Alternative for Germany and UKIP) which still nourish evidence scepticism, although this type of scepticism should have already been abandoned bearing in mind the robustness of climate science evidence.

The results of the analysis of the links between globalization and climate change are inconclusive for the majority of the far-right parties (Alternative for Germany, Party for Freedom, Vox, Sweden Democrats). Two of the parties (UKIP and National Rally) exhibit far-right ecologism and ecological nationalism. The UKIP goes a step further and also displays environmental Malthusianism, which is also present in Vlaams Belang, however, only implicitly. On the other hand, the National Rally stands in favour of natalism, but only in the context of the European population.

With regards to the perception of Europe's far-right parties of the role of international agreements/instruments in addressing climate and environmental issues, three of them are openly opposed (Alternative for Germany, Party for Freedom and UKIP), two show inconclusive results (Vlaams Belang and Vox), one shows implicit disapproval (National Rally), and surprisingly, one far-right party (Sweden Democrats) is openly in favour of international cooperation evident from their ardent support of the EU carbon trading scheme.

Concerning energy transition, as many as three of the sampled parties (National Rally, Party for Freedom and Vox) provide no opinion in this regard within their 2019 EP election manifestos. Three of them (Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany and UKIP) are in favour of the use of nuclear energy. Two of the parties (Alternative for Germany and UKIP) support the use of coal and stand against the process of decarbonisation and against the use of wind and solar

energy. On the other hand, Vlaams Belang is in favour of the use of solar and wind energy, whereas the Sweden Democrats are the only party positioning itself openly against the use of fossil fuels.

The results of the analysis show that unlike the uniform stance on immigration, Europe's far right has a diversified opinion on climate change and environmentalism. The increased presence of climate and environment-related topics in their party manifestos shows that they are gradually taking ownership of these issues and see them as a new front for fighting battles. Although the far-right parties in Europe have attained larger representation in parliaments, they are still not able to bring significant shift in the voting outcomes. However, there is no doubt that their actions and agendas are having an impact on the positioning of mainstream conservative parties who do have a meaningful legislative power. In a situation where a far-right party is leading an aggressive campaign on an environmental issue, there are two impact scenarios for the mainstream conservative party: either to succumb to pressure and align itself with some of the views of the radical right [in an attempt to avoid the disenchantment of part of the right-wing electorate], or to distance itself from the positions of the far right as being too radical. Such analysis could be carried out by comparing the environment-related communication of far-right parties and of mainstream conservative parties with the general public, whilst trying to establish a consequential link. The insights obtained could shed more light on whether the far-right is capable of exercising sufficient pressure on mainstream conservatives to provoke a significant change in their positioning.

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